
CEA Information Note

Canadian Education Association / Association canadienne d'éducation
A Tradition of Excellence / Tradition d'excellence

French Immersion Today

August 1992



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INTRODUCTION

FRENCH IMMERSION is a proven successful Canadian approach to language learning. It is indeed a national and international phenomena that has been proven a highly effective way to promote a second language.

In 1983, the CEA conducted a survey on French immersion to examine the issues and effects of the program on school boards. Now, a decade later, the CEA Advisory Committee on Communication and Marketing Services suggested that an information note on the current state of French immersion would be useful. How are the enrolments? Are they increasing, stabilizing or decreasing? Is immersion's popularity still as strong, or are other special programs siphoning students away?

No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills, and the academic achievement of French immersion students, have been well documented and research shows that the program works. Our purpose here is not to review the results of these studies but rather to provide a brief look at the general state of French immersion in Canada as revealed by our CEA survey. Our questionnaire was answered by French co-ordinators or senior administrators in school boards throughout the country. Our particular focus was on enrolments, entry levels, the availability of French immersion teachers and noteworthy developments in the program since 1988.

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THE SURVEY

THE CEA sent out a questionnaire to 184 school boards across Canada in March 1992. A total of 104 school boards responded, which represents a response rate of 57%.

	Questionnaires Sent	Received
Northwest Territories	2	1
British Columbia	24	14
Alberta	28	17
Saskatchewan	15	7
Manitoba	22	13
Ontario	46	26
Quebec	16	8
New Brunswick	14	8
Nova Scotia	6	4
Prince Edward Island	4	1
Newfoundland	7	5
	<u>184</u>	<u>104</u>

FRENCH IMMERSION: WHERE IS IT TODAY?

IMMERSION PROGRAMS are an effective way of producing functional bilingualism. All provinces and territories have immersion programs which can range from 100% immersion in the early elementary grades to 50% in the middle grades and 25% in secondary school. Figures by Statistics Canada reveal that 284,503 students were enrolled in French immersion in 1990-91. This represents approximately 11% of the total number of students in second language classes and 6% of the total school population in Canada.

Out of the 104 respondents, 90 school boards (87%) had a French immersion program. The South Shore Protestant Regional School Board (St-Lambert, Quebec) was the first Canadian school board to establish one in 1965. At least five or more boards a year began an immersion program during the following years: 1973 (6 boards), 1977 (9), with a peak in 1978 (11), 1981 (6), 1983 (6), and 1986 (5). During all other years, fewer than five responding school boards began FI (French immersion) and the most recent program was set up in 1988. Thus, a high concentration of the programs were established in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A number of the larger boards introduced FI early on: The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (1967); Saskatoon Roman Catholic School Division No. 20, Regina Roman Catholic School Division No. 81, Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1 (1969); Ottawa Board of Education (1970); Toronto Board of Education (1971); Edmonton Catholic School Board, Edmonton Public School Board (1972); Calgary Board of Education, North York Board of Education, Vancouver School Board (1973).

Percentage of Students in Immersion

In order to compare the enrolments, the survey asked for the student enrolment in French immersion, extended French, and core French for both September 1988 and September 1991. Eighty-nine school boards provided us with figures on their immersion enrolments. The most obvious findings are:

54% of the school boards have French immersion enrolments that are within 1% of what they were in 1988. For a majority of school boards, enrolments in French immersion have reached a plateau after years of dramatic increases. Although there has not been any significant growth, neither has there been any significant decline. Indeed, in five of the boards where enrolments had stabilized, total student enrolment was down, indicating that more students were in the language program. For example, at Saskatoon School Division No. 13, there are 130 fewer students in 1991-92 than in 1988-89 and yet 201 more students are enrolled in French immersion. Sometimes, the number of registered students goes up from one year to the next, but the total student

enrolment increases also, making the percentage of students in French immersion decrease. Although there were 349 more students enrolled in FI in 1991 than in 1988 at the Ottawa Board of Education, because the total student enrolment had gone up by 2,359, the percentage of students in immersion showed a decrease.

38% of the boards have increased their enrolments in French immersion by more than 1% since 1988. In British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, the increases are modest, all are under 3%. However, some school boards in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick have shown remarkable growth. In Ontario, the Hastings-Prince Edward County Roman Catholic Separate School Board (Belleville) has increased by 12% since 1988. In Quebec, the Protestant Regional School Board of Châteauguay Valley has gone up 30.9%.

8% of the school boards have French immersion enrolments that are more than 1% lower than what they were in 1988. Again, however, these decreases are not dramatic — all were under 3%.

Number of Students in Immersion

As opposed to the percentage of student enrolment in immersion, comparing the number of students enrolled in French immersion in 1988 and 1991 gives us another perspective on the state of this program. When this is done, the results are:

77% of school boards have more immersion students in 1991-92 than in 1988-89.

14% have lower enrolments.

9% have about the same (no more or no less than a ten student difference).

These figures are encouraging and demonstrate that for the majority of boards in our survey, French immersion continues to be chosen by a strong and stable segment of the student population.

Extended French

In some boards, a large percentage of the student body is enrolled in extended French programs. At the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Board of Education (Cornwall), 13% of the students take immersion while 18.2% take extended French. At Laurentian School Board (Lachute), 18% are in immersion while 81.2% are in extended French (there is no core French). Similarly, 38.7% of students at Laurenval School Board (Laval) are in extended French. All students in junior and senior kindergarten at the Carleton Roman Catholic Separate School Board (Nepean) have a 50% French and 50% English program. In grades 1-6, 3/4 of the curriculum is given in English while 1/4 is offered in French. Late partial FI (50% of curriculum in French) starts in grade 7 and continues to the end of Ontario Academic Course (OAC). As well, the extended French (75 minutes per day) and core (40 minutes) programs are also offered.

**School Boards with the Highest Student Enrolment
in French Immersion (1991)**

	Enrolment in FI	Total enrolment	% in FI
1. Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (English section only)	9,035	18,733	48.2%
2. Calgary Board of Education	8,960	94,274	9.5%
3. Ottawa Board of Education (+418 students in extended French)	7,461	31,505	23.7%
5. Waterloo County Board of Education	5,009	54,249	9.2%
4. Toronto Board of Education (+1,732 students in extended French)	4,672	68,900	6.8%
6. Commission scolaire Baldwin-Cartier (English section only)	4,975	6,625	75.1%
7. Edmonton Public School Board	3,726	78,179	4.8%
8. Metropolitan Separate School Board (+ 770 students in extended French)	3,060	105,000	2.9%
9. Winnipeg School Division No. 1	3,014	34,313	8.8%
10. North York Board of Education	2,942	60,452	4.9%
11. Scarborough Board of Education	2,745	76,046	3.7%
12. Vancouver School Board	2,714	55,289	4.9%
13. Coquitlam S.D. No. 43	2,668	25,580	10.4%
14. Fredericton S.D. Nos. 26-27	2,646	11,240	23.5%
15. Edmonton Catholic School Board	2,541	30,739	8.3%

**School Boards with the Highest Percentage of
Students in French Immersion**

	% in FI	Enrolment in FI	Total Enrol.
1. Commission scolaire Baldwin-Cartier (English sector only)	75.1%	4,975	6,625
2. Protestant Regional School Board of Châteauguay Valley (+ 156 students in extended French)	60.4%	2,112	3,516
3. Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal (English sector only)	48.2%	9,035	18,733
4. Commission scolaire Saint-Exupéry (English sector only)	40.0%	125	312
5. Bathurst S. D. No. 42	36.9%	1,140	3,093
6. Campbellton S. D. No. 38 (+ 57 students in extended French)	34.4%	532	1,547
7. Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board of Education	29.1%	658	2,264
8. Nipissing District RCSS Board	26.4%	1,007	3,820
9. South Shore Protestant Regional School Board (English elementary section only)	25.0%	1,721	6,889
10. Ottawa Board of Education (+ 418 students in extended French)	23.7%	7,461	31,505
11. Fredericton S. D. Nos. 26-27	23.5%	2,646	11,240
12. St. Boniface S. D. No. 4	22.4%	1,346	6,016
13. Kenora District RCSS Board	21.7%	262	1,209
14. Sussex School District No. 18	21.6%	611	2,824
15. Assiniboine South S.D. No. 3	20.8%	1,142	6,951
16. Norwood S. D. No. 8	20.6%	286	1,392

REASONS FOR AN INCREASE IN IMMERSION PROGRAMS

FRENCH IMMERSION continues to be popular because of the increased awareness of the advantages and benefits of knowing both of Canada's official languages. It is seen as enhancing opportunities for better employment. A second language confers cultural and educational benefits to bilingual citizens and offers them a better understanding of Canada and its people. The program is viewed as an enriched educational opportunity that will challenge the child. The successful achievement results of French immersion students in both French and English tests are an incentive for many parents to enrol their child. Learning a second language is never a waste of time, it opens you to another culture, it improves communication skills, and helps you become more competitive in the global market.

The continued growth of the program is in large part due to the boom of immersion students who were in the lead class a number of years ago when boards began the program and are now moving through the system — each year a new grade is added. These school boards are still in an expansion phase and their enrolments are forecasted to increase until the immersion students reach the final grade of secondary school and the immersion enrolments begin to stabilize. At the Calgary Board of Education, there are 1,544 more students enrolled in French immersion in 1991 than in 1988 and most of this increase is in the continuing immersion program at the secondary level.

As well, the board's own attitude to its program is a determinant. How much publicity does the program get? At the Toronto Board of Education, publicity for the French immersion program is emphasized and this visibility helps enrolments by increasing awareness of the advantages and benefits of the program. "Each year we try to improve the publicity and the quality of information to the community, e.g., posters exploding some myths about intensive French programs, press conferences targeting the community media, particularly the media serving non-English-speaking communities. The fact that there are five different intensive FSL (extended and immersion) programs within the board permits movement within these programs, thus we frequently retain students who might otherwise transfer out."

Some districts are situated in a growing town or city and, as a result of more students coming into the system, a higher number of students are choosing immersion. There are two other important factors that school boards use to favour or control enrolment: whether or not busing is provided for students to immersion programs and the extent to which immersion enrolment is limited at the entry level.

In some cases, more choices in immersion entry levels are being offered. Children whose parents were reluctant to register them for early immersion have the possibility of entering the middle or late immersion program. The increasing availability and variety of secondary school course offerings in French immersion also serve to retain those students in the program.

Peaks

For the majority of our survey respondents, total French immersion enrolments have not yet reached their peak; 56% registered a higher enrolment in 1991-92 than in any previous year. This is not necessarily because more students are entering the immersion program (although in some boards this is so), but because classes are moving through the system and a new class is being added each year.

REASONS FOR DECLINING ENROLMENTS

IN SCHOOL BOARDS where French immersion enrolments are levelling off or declining, a number of reasons are given. The top one is the **wider variety of course and program offerings**. Schools and services for artistically, athletically and academically gifted students are increasingly being offered and compete for students. Alternative schools and programs attract a similar clientele as immersion. In Western Canada, there is an increased interest in Pacific Rim languages. In 1993, Alberta Education will begin testing a formal Japanese-as-a-second-language program in some of its schools.

Some districts are seeing a decline, although none of the boards surveyed had a decrease of more than 150 students (total number of students in immersion at all levels) **compared with the 1988 figure**. This is not to say that some segments of the French immersion program may face larger declines. Perhaps there are 200 fewer students in the early immersion program, but this is offset by a greater number of students in secondary school immersion. **Indeed, if one just looks at the immersion program at the elementary and junior high level, 16% of school boards have a decline in their program; the largest loss registered was 215 students.**

French immersion programs may not have the support or structure of well-established regular English programs; parents and students may be concerned by a perception that it is not as well-developed. Students who have learning difficulties may transfer out of the French immersion program because of a lack of special education support services.

In addition, when many immersion programs were started in schools, core French courses emphasized the grammar and translation model, full of repetition and drills. Generally, they were an ineffective and a boring way to learn French. The four-year *National Core French Study*, which began in 1985, was sponsored by the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers, funded by the Secretary of State and supported by the ministries of education and school boards across Canada. Its final report, published in 1990, emphasized a new teaching approach to core, a multi-dimensional curriculum model based on a communicative and experiential approach. The implementation of the study is changing

the way core French is taught. Courses are being expanded and improved and greater importance is being placed on core as a way of developing French competency. As it always has been, core French remains the way in which the majority of young Canadians learn FSL.

Constitutional difficulties have had a negative effect on immersion enrolments. When French immersion first began, idealistic hopes encouraged the belief that the program would foster national unity; the constitutional wranglings of the last few years have clearly shown that this has not been the case. As well, the statements of some political parties about bilingualism has no doubt made many people question the value of being bilingual. Parents may be disillusioned about whether French immersion has a future or whether being bilingual will help their children get a job.

The economic recession was mentioned — in some communities, hard times have caused some professional families whose children were in immersion to transfer out of the area. New families moving in are often less inclined to place older children in the upper grades of the program. A 1989 study entitled *Early and Middle French Immersion Programs: Report on the Substudy of Attrition*, commissioned by the Metropolitan Toronto School Board and produced by the Modern Language Centre of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, showed that about 60% of French immersion losses at the Toronto Board of Education were attributable to students moving out of the board's jurisdiction.

Many secondary school students, concerned with university admission, decide to switch to the English program. The dropout rate of the program at high school is a concern. A study conducted for Canadian Parents for French by Dr. Nancy D. Halsall found that between 20% to 80% of students in high school left the program. Reasons for doing so included 1) not enough variety in courses, 2) heavy work load, 3) the choice between continuing with immersion or enrolling in another desirable program, 4) the belief that better grades would be obtained by studying in English, 5) being unable to practise speaking French both in and outside of class, 6) being satisfied with their level of fluency in French, 7) boredom with program, and 8) concerns about the quality of teachers and program. It was also found that students were reluctant to change schools in order to enrol in secondary school French immersion.¹

Similarly, a 1989 task force report on bilingual education in Calgary public schools found that about one in five students drops out of French immersion classes once they reach high school, 10 times the departure rate of elementary and junior high.

Usually the students themselves, rather than their parents, want to leave the program at the secondary level. Peer pressure plays a role; adolescents are very much concerned about the school and the program that their friends are choosing.

1. Nancy D. Halsall, *Attrition/Retention of Students in French Immersion With Particular Emphasis on Secondary School* (Ottawa: Canadian Parents for French, 1991).

Reasons for decrease in French immersion:

- students transferring to other programs
- transportation difficulties
- lack of immersion program in neighbourhood school deters some parents, particularly if transportation is not offered; parents prefer to send children to neighbourhood school
- school boards limit enrolment in the FI program
- improved core program, greater percentage of time spent on French in core programs
- students moving out of district
- students in high school prefer to take courses in English, wider variety of options
- constitutional problems deter some parents from enrolling children; some parents may not think there is such a need to learn French
- general decline in student population in some districts
- teacher shortage
- greater number of ESL students who want a firm grasp of English — a report by the Ottawa Board of Education in December 1991 *A Profile of Ottawa Board of Education Heritage Language Students* found that certain heritage language pupils (Arabic and Chinese groups) had low enrolments in French immersion.

FRENCH SERVICES FOR FI STUDENTS

DO SCHOOL BOARDS provide other types of services in French to immersion students besides the regular academic program? The first to be added are resource teachers qualified to teach in French, special education teachers who provide remedial and enrichment services and co-ordinators of French-language services.

Although immersion students can access English specialized services (special education, gifted, counselling, social services), offering these services in French is not widespread. However, as immersion programs become more well-established such services are increasing — 26% of the respondents indicated they offer some special services in French, most often support teachers for remedial help and learning resource teachers. One consideration when hiring resource teachers is whether they can provide the service in both English and French. At the Etobicoke Board of Education, support is provided for designated learning disabled students in French or English as decided by a review committee. The board also has resource teachers, mostly for elementary students.

At the Toronto Board of Education, 25 of the 29 elementary schools offering intensive FSL (immersion/extended) have bilingual staff in their Learning Centre for students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Most of the nine secondary schools offering intensive FSL also have qualified and

designated bilingual staff for such students. Policy dictates that as these positions become vacant, new staff will have the requisite special education qualifications as well as proficiency and qualifications in FSL.

Fort Garry School Division No. 5 (Winnipeg) has a K-12 immersion program with parallel services in French including all specialists at the school level and division. At the Scarborough Board of Education, most elementary schools offer a withdrawal support service to FI students experiencing difficulty. The Ottawa Board of Education has French immersion programs for the gifted and support teachers for remedial help for early French immersion students (1-6). The Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District 1 has a French gifted program called Education Plus in one of its seven immersion schools. St. Boniface School Division No. 4 also has a program for the gifted in French. Grande Prairie School District No. 2357 now has a full-time French special education teacher. At Winnipeg School District No. 1, the board provides in-school resource teaching in French as well as gifted programming and is looking at providing some special education services. School District of Mystery Lake No. 2355 (Thompson, Manitoba) offers counselling, psychological, and resource teacher services to FI students in French.

GIFTED PROGRAMS

ONE REASON this survey was undertaken was to see to what extent new programs like those for the gifted were having an impact on French immersion enrolments. But as our results indicate, the effect of these programs is not as significant as we thought.

Seventy-three school boards (81%) indicated that they have a program for gifted children in English. Of those, 58 boards, representing 80%, said this program had not affected French immersion enrolments; 17% said it had; and 3% were unsure. The principal reason for this relatively low effect on the FI program is that in many boards, the gifted services are based on the **pull-out model in which gifted students are taken out of their regular classroom for a certain amount of time every week**. The Renzulli Revolving Door Identification Model is particularly favoured by school boards. Since the gifted program or services are generally offered on a part-time rather than a full-time basis, students usually do not have to choose between one or the other. The gifted services are available to French immersion students in English or, in those boards that provide it, in French, on an individual basis according to student needs and interest. The increased hiring of bilingual resource teachers enables these services to be offered in French in some boards.

Early immersion usually starts in kindergarten but gifted programs or services often begin in the middle years (grade 4). By then, the child is well-established in the immersion program.

If, on the other hand, parents are obliged to choose between the immersion or gifted program, this may well have a negative impact on immersion enrolments. Some parents may prefer the gifted program.

while others consider that immersion is, in fact, an enriched program. The impact of gifted services on immersion enrolments tends to be more pronounced at the secondary than at the elementary level.

ENTRY LEVELS

BY FAR the most popular entry level is early immersion followed by late then middle immersion. Senior kindergarten is the most popular entry point in early immersion with grade 1 the second most favoured.

Number of School Boards that Offer the Following Entry Levels for French Immersion

Early Immersion

Junior kindergarten	1
Senior kindergarten/Early Childhood Services	44
Junior kindergarten or senior kindergarten	2
Kindergarten/Early Childhood Services or grade 1	20
Grade 1	11
Grade 2	0

Middle Immersion

Grade 3	1
Grade 4	7
Grade 5	3

Late immersion

Grade 6	13
Grade 7/Secondary 1 in Quebec	28
Grade 8	6
Grade 9	7

Continuing Immersion

Grade 10	7
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46% of school boards offer one entry level for immersion

40% offer two entry levels

14% offer three entry levels

In addition to the immersion program that begins in senior kindergarten and grade 4, the Toronto Board of Education also offers extended French that can begin in junior kindergarten, grade 4 or grade 7.

Although each entry point may have advantages and disadvantages, there are several reasons given for the popularity of early French immersion. Early immersion research has shown that the earlier a child is exposed to a second language, the more success he or she will likely have in speaking and understanding the language. Early French immersion provides more students with the possibility for functional bilingual-

ism than any other FSL program. It allows students to comfortably assimilate the language and acquire a competent level of French early enough to continue their study of French at higher grade levels.

It is easier for young children to learn a second language; they are more relaxed in imitating a French role model, thus gaining the confidence and the willingness to risk expressing themselves in a second language. Young pupils do not have the inhibitions that older students have. A number of our respondents felt that early immersion was the most democratic least selective entry level; accessibility was granted to a broader variety of students. Bonding with peers in the immersion class helped build a commitment to remain in the program. In May 1991, when the Etobicoke Board of Education proposed replacing the early immersion program, which began in kindergarten, with a middle immersion program beginning in grade 4, parents rallied to save the early immersion program.

Parents who prefer middle or late immersion entry state that they want their child to receive a good foundation in English before he or she starts a second language. The argument is made that children need a solid grounding in English first — an Ontario Ministry of Education study *Early Years Consultation Paper* suggested that there may be value in developing a strong first-language base in English prior to second-language learning. Students whose mother tongue is neither French nor English may find it preferable to get a good base in English in the early grades. On the other hand, some researchers believe that language skills are transferable and that a child with a good command of any language will do well in immersion and learn English outside the classroom.

Another reason given for choosing middle or late immersion is that by age 9 or 12, any of the child's learning problems have been assessed and parents are thus better informed to make a decision regarding the child's academic program. Late entry attracts those pupils who are highly motivated to learn French, there is a higher student retention factor and a strong commitment from both parents and students. Late immersion may also be more cost-effective for the board; fewer teachers and resources are needed and it is easier to administer because there are fewer schools involved. Nevertheless, early immersion is the preferred choice and when it is introduced at a school board, demand drops off for late immersion.

Middle immersion is not offered in many boards. Although research has been conducted on both early immersion and late immersion, it is only in the past few years that middle immersion, the newest option for learning French as a second language, is being studied more thoroughly. The Ottawa Board of Education has undertaken several studies on middle immersion recently. In *Early, Middle or Late? Ottawa Board of Education Students in Three French Immersion Programmes in Grade 6 and Grade 8* (September 1990), the results of a study indicate that students in one program did not perform consistently better than those in another, but the fact that the "proficiency of MFI students tends to be between that of the EFI and the LFI groups is not particularly surprising in light of the relative numbers of hours of instruction in French." The introduction of the MFI program in that board did not substantially reduce the percentage of students choosing early or late immersion.

TEACHING FRENCH IMMERSION

THE KEY OBJECTIVE of French immersion is a high level of fluency in French for students. The goal is functional bilingualism upon graduation from secondary school while possessing the same academic qualifications as their counterparts who have received their instruction only in English. As well, the program strives to expose students to the French language and culture so that they may learn to appreciate it and value others.

The various provincial and territorial departments of education have established their own goals for immersion and extended French programs. Like the English program, French immersion emphasizes oral communication and listening skills in kindergarten. More importance is given to speaking and vocabulary development in grade 1, and from grade 1 on there is gradual development of reading and writing skills. Boards mentioned that there is really no difference between strategies and methods used for English and French immersion programs. An emphasis is placed on listening and speaking throughout the program, but particularly in the early grades. Oral skills are given more importance in kindergarten to grade 3; reading and writing skills, even though started as early as grade 1, are stressed in grades 4 to 6. Once the students have had time to experiment with the language, the focus on grammar starts in the upper elementary grades.

The goal of the East York Board of Education's French immersion program is to develop the students' ability to communicate fluently and competently in both oral and written French through a balanced four-skills approach and to gain an appreciation of the French presence in Canada and the world. As the students acquire French reading and writing skills more time is spent on them. At the secondary level, the students' skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing are refined. At Edmonton Public School Board, some concrete goals for the immersion program are spelled out. By grade 3 students should be able to ask questions about a story, by grade 6 research and report on a topic, by grade 9 read a French newspaper, and by grade 12 judge the relationship of characters in literature to real-life situations. Similarly, the Lakehead District Roman Catholic School Board (Thunder Bay, Ontario) has specific objectives for its French immersion graduates. At the end of secondary school, students should be able to participate easily in conversation and discussion, 2) understand films, radio and television programs, 3) pursue post-secondary education in French or English, 4) pursue employment in either French or English, and 5) have some understanding of the culture and institutions of French Canada.

French immersion has evolved and matured from the days when materials were scarce, teacher training was rare and the philosophy of the program was focused on grammar drills. Today, it is a child-centred approach supported by authentic resources. The child learns by doing and from real-life experiences; he or she is exposed to a range of cultural activities. The Sault Ste. Marie Board said that the communicative approach, wherein the child is drawn into communication through relevant and purposeful experiences, seems to be the most successful.

The child perceives a reason to communicate and does so comfortably as he or she senses the need.

The most effective techniques are student-centred and student-directed, encouraging individual interests and skill development. Many boards indicated their support of the whole language approach. At St. Boniface School Division No. 4, a whole language approach is combined with a systematic identification of common errors, and formal instructional strategies are applied across the curriculum to reduce errors. At the Waterloo County Board of Education, the immersion program "provides for different developmental stages, varying learning styles, active participation and ensures a degree of success for all learners. Grouping, whole language, activity-based, collaborative and co-operative learning, interactive learning are what we have found to be the most effective for the teaching of French immersion." Programs should include an emphasis on areas that are problems in the second language. At Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board (North Bay, Ontario) classes where strong teacher-directed lessons are evident succeed the most. The teacher's commitment to the program and use of the language along with what may be viewed as a structured approach creates very capable students.

Boards stress the need to have students experience a language and have reason to use it in a meaningful context. Children learn by doing. For example, have them live in French during the school experience, meet their real needs through communicating in French, read to them and have them read. Use a variety in teaching strategies with an emphasis on students doing, integration of activities, with the emphasis on individual progress. Successful methods used in FI include computer programs in French, co-operative learning, small group instruction, active learning strategies that provide many varied opportunities for extended language use combined with focused attention on the second language.

English

The most popular grade for introducing English in the French immersion program is **grade 3** — 42% of our respondents begin offering it then. Next is grade 1 (25%), grade 2 (18%), grade 4 (11%) and kindergarten (4%).

Research has demonstrated that immersion students tend to lag behind students in the English program until about grade 5; afterwards there is no appreciable difference. Both the school districts in Bathurst and Fredericton in New Brunswick have done tests to measure English skills. In both cases, English language scores for immersion students were higher than the scores of students who were not in immersion.

MAKING FRENCH COME ALIVE

INVOLVING STUDENTS in interesting activities that make them interact with francophones and francophone culture and show them the benefits of learning French are a vital component of any immersion program. What an array of activities were mentioned! Exchanges with Quebec and even France, trips to Quebec, the New Brunswick Intraprovincial Exchange Program (whereby anglophone students from the province are twinned with francophone students), class twinning programs with third world French-speaking countries; immersion camps and weekend or all-week experiences in a French environment; cultural activities such as concerts and plays, visiting authors and artists (students in the Courtenay School District attend the French Children's Festival in Vancouver); videos and films, French film festivals; and activities sponsored by Canadian Parents for French. The list goes on: public speaking contests, pen pals, French Week or a Journée française in the immersion school (Saskatoon School Division No. 13 holds a *Parle Parle, jase jase* cultural day for grade 7 students), Voyageur Days, *Bonhomme Carnaval* Day, literature circles, writers' workshops for grades 4 to 12, cabane à sucre activities as well as French science fairs and book fairs.

Seek out the resources that your community and the surrounding areas have to offer. In Toronto, several museums, like the Royal Ontario Museum and the Ontario Science Centre, offer tours and activities in French. The Cape Breton District School Board offers immersion students visits to the Acadian area, week-long visits to the Université Ste-Anne campus (a francophone university) and an exchange program with students from the French islands of St-Pierre et Miquelon.

At the Hamilton Board of Education, French immersion students were part of an American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) learning network project that enabled them to link up with schools in Germany, England and the United States. All of the communication was in French and twice a week for 11 weeks the students put questions and messages into a computer that transferred the data over phone lines to other schools hooked into the network. It was an original and exciting way to improve the students' writing skills. Brandon School Division is involved in the initial stages of a consortium with other divisions whereby some secondary immersion programs may be delivered via distance education.

Some boards have a budget especially ear-marked for FSL supplies, library books, resources, and curriculum development. A number of boards have French resource centres and they have translated and created resource documents for the immersion stream. The Calgary Board of Education has created French-language resources by adapting the provincial programs and support for the identification of special needs (Guidelines for School Resource Groups, CBE, 1991). Improving and increasing classroom and library curriculum and material resources is important. The Edmonton Catholic School District No. 7 operates an instructional materials centre where teachers borrow materials to support their classroom instruction. Vancouver School Board has written standards for its French library collections and produces a French immersion newsletter.

How do boards strive towards a high quality program that maximizes the spoken and written French of its students? One concern expressed was that, as the program has expanded and become more accessible to a broad spectrum of students of varying abilities and interest levels, the quality of spoken and written French has levelled off. Many of the weaker students have difficulty speaking and writing. Communities in which there are few French language role models outside the school face an added challenge compared to those in areas where the francophone community is more visible.

Program quality is a continual concern. Respondents gave us the following ways to enhance it:

- teachers who are more experienced and qualified
- reducing the turnover of staff in the immersion program
- teachers from a francophone background who, besides their facility with the language, can speak from personal experience about their culture
- objectives that are clearly outlined, improved curriculum materials and teaching material techniques, greater number of resources
- contacts with FI teachers elsewhere to keep staff updated on the latest practices
- well-informed parents who better understand the FI program
- activities that involve students in francophone culture and show them concrete benefits of learning French
- child-centred classrooms
- creative listening and meaningful reading experience
- active dramatizing experiences
- project work, co-operative learning and teaching
- integration of a school team approach
- language-rich environment and active learning

FRENCH IMMERSION STAFF

WHEN CEA's *French Immersion and School Boards: Issues and Effects* was published in 1983, the number one problem school boards reported was finding qualified staff. In the early years of the program, the demand for qualified immersion teachers could not be met, particularly at the secondary level. Is the situation different today?

Our 1992 survey indicated that the situation is definitely improving — **60% of the respondents felt there was no shortage of French immersion teachers** while 40% felt there was. Certainly the problem seems to have been alleviated but, according to the boards, things have only improved during the past two years. In 1992, for the first time in four or five years, the Toronto Board of Education did not send hiring teams for elementary immersion teachers beyond certain Ontario faculties of education. As well, boards receive applications from prospective teachers

across the country. Indeed, during the past few years as the recession has battered the economy, recent graduates are finding it more difficult to find a job.

Although school boards underlined the fact that they have been able to find the number of French immersion teachers needed, the problem they have lies in not always having a good enough selection of suitable candidates. In some cases, they would like to have more applicants with a solid immersion or FSL background. The qualifications and training of the teachers hired have not always been as high as school boards would like — they have had to hire some teachers in the past who were only marginally fluent in the language. As well, there is difficulty in finding specialist immersion teachers in subjects like math and science. However, since the most qualified teachers tend to gravitate to immersion, school boards say their big problem is in hiring elementary core French teachers. The situation is also exaggerated or reduced depending on the perceived desirability of the school board's location. Those in large urban centres and popular tourist areas do not have a problem attracting staff unlike a school district in a small remote location. Brandon School Division finds that "It is often a challenge to find fluent teachers with some immersion methodology training who are willing to locate in a smaller centre on a long-term basis."

For many boards, a most difficult concern is finding qualified teachers to replace those away from their classes on a short-term basis like maternity or sick leave. There is certainly a shortage of FSL substitutes. As well, late teacher resignations reduce the potential pool of candidates from which to choose. Teachers may have until the end of May to officially resign from their position but, by then, many of the best candidates have been already hired.

The shortage of substitutes has a detrimental effect on the in-service opportunities for FSL teachers. In its January 1992 *Annual Report*, the Toronto Board of Education's French as a Second Language Department stated, "The major impediment to release-time in-service has been the shortage of such people to replace the classroom teachers participating in the in-service." Even when supply teachers are available, budget restrictions limit release-time in-service and most of it must follow a voluntary after-school model.

According to our survey, teachers working in Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba are more likely to have been trained in their own province while a majority of immersion teachers in school boards from Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories, tend to have been trained outside the province.

A school district's first choice is to recruit their French immersion staff from their own province or territory. They prefer to start close to home with the local university graduates or with teachers transferring to their jurisdiction from within the province or territory. Then, if they need additional staff, they will look farther afield. Recruiting teachers from other provinces has often been necessary in the past, but boards find that many out-of-province teachers do not tend to stay for more than two or three years before returning home. Fewer boards are now recruiting from Quebec. Until the late 1980s, the Surrey School District in British Columbia made recruiting trips to Quebec, but this is no longer necessary.

In the majority of school boards, 70% or more of their French immersion teaching staff is francophone.

None of the boards provides a financial incentive in hiring French immersion teachers. Two boards mentioned they provide help in finding accommodation, one provides a moving allowance. Many see their resources, personnel, and professional development opportunities (like a FI teacher association network) as a good incentive for teachers to work for them. The Scarborough Board of Education holds a social event for FI teachers early in the school year to enable them to get to know each other and St. Boniface School Division has an orientation program for new teachers. The North York Board of Education provides FI teachers with a weekend at the outdoor education centre to enhance team-building and stress management. At Nipissing District RCSSB, elementary immersion teachers meet monthly with their colleagues from the public board to exchange ideas and the board's four immersion schools devote one professional day per year to the program.

About 80% of school boards offering immersion have French language monitors who provide extra help for students learning FSL and they find them most helpful. Monitors are university students who assist classroom teachers by providing remedial, regular or enriched instruction to pupils. The monitors bring with them a cultural and linguistic background well-suited to FSL learning.

IMPROVING THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAM

HOW CAN the French immersion program be improved? Listed here are the most often mentioned areas school boards said could use improvement. **The number one answer was in providing more in-service to teachers.**

In-service

There is an on-going need for effective in-service and updating of teaching strategies. School boards hoped for:

- opportunities and more time for teachers and administrators within and outside their school board to meet and network, plan activities and develop ideas
- more workshops, conferences, special education services and improved and updated curriculum documents
- better second language methodologies for immersion teachers, particularly those teaching in subjects other than French language arts
- more teacher training opportunities and professional development need to be presented in French

-
- professional development activities and second language courses at a post-secondary institution to improve staff's language and pedagogical skills
 - increased preparatory and release time for teachers to work on writing teams and collaborate on better assessment and evaluation techniques
 - earlier recruitment of qualified personnel in order to provide teachers new to the program or from out-of-province with training and in-service

Curriculum and Teaching

- establishing greater clarity in the goals, objectives and language expectations of immersion
- more insistence on correct speaking and improved written skills
- implementation of new methodologies regarding current materials, more consultative help for teachers
- improved ministerial guidelines and better implementation of provincial curriculum
- immersion centres — single-track rather than dual-track schools (however, in many communities this is not feasible and there is opposition to this concept)
- examining carefully the language learning strategies being used in grades 4-12, including the content subjects (science, math) — more could be done. The Quebec Ministry of Education is developing a new guide for kindergarten and elementary immersion students based on the whole language approach.
- finding appropriate and improved materials and support resources is a big challenge, especially at the secondary level
- offering more courses in French at the secondary level as numbers warrant could result in a greater enrolment at this level; course offerings at junior/senior high need to be expanded and the curriculum in the French language literature courses at senior high need to be improved
- making French immersion a much higher priority than it now is in some boards — a better understanding of second language learning by administration would influence commitment for the program
- support from administrators when trying to implement changes
- offering a middle entry level for FI (if financially feasible)
- a lower student/teacher ratio the first two years
- continued thrust on effective strategies coupled with more staff and student accountability

Activities

- more cultural activities for immersion students both inside and outside the school; encouraging more contact with other FI schools
- more contact with, and exposure to, a francophone milieu. By providing more contacts with native French speakers, the quality and accuracy of students' French-language skills can be improved.

Special Services

- special education services (remedial or enrichment) available in French at all levels of the program
- increasing supplementary help in French to students who are experiencing difficulties
- providing transportation to the immersion school — busing would provide better access; some students cannot begin or continue in the program because transportation is not provided

Resources

- board and regionally-developed resource documents that are available in French — these materials are usually available in English only. (This area embraces both some translation and a lot of research, adaptation and development (e.g., parallel resource lists of French-language materials.)
- improved instructional resources and programs written for FI classes — until very recently the majority of materials were published for francophone first language students, forcing FI teachers to adapt the materials themselves
- more materials geared to the needs of FSL students; materials written especially for a late immersion clientele
- updated FI pedagogy strategies for second language proficiency development
- curriculum materials in subject areas other than French language arts should be available in French as well as English. FI teachers should not be expected to translate them.

Staff

- hiring teachers with a good proficiency in French
- bilingual administrators who can help address teachers' concerns; the immersion program has encouraged the Norwood School Division No. 8 in Winnipeg to adopt a bilingual administrative policy
- more teachers trained to teach at the secondary level
- increased remedial staff for both gifted and learning-challenged students, human services such as bilingual guidance counsellors and teacher assistants
- a full-time district FSL co-ordinator/a full-time immersion consultant at the departments of education
- the services and expertise of immersion consultants to provide direction and support to administrators and teachers

Communication Activities

- more thought and planning of communication activities regarding FSL
- greater focus on developing community awareness and support of immersion

(In Lethbrige, concern over the high attrition rate of immersion students prompted the public and Catholic board to take creative action. In order to increase numbers at the entry level so more students will stay in the program, the French language consultant Louise Robert, who is shared by both boards, organized a promotional video in 1992 for a publicity blitz aimed at parents of preschoolers. Its goal was to increase parental awareness about the immersion program and to describe the advantages of being bilingual.)

- the need for a better PR program at the school level — schools can do more to promote their immersion program in their neighbourhood
- continued school board, principal, parental and trustee support for the program
- additional support in making students aware of the high school program (extending the immersion program to a larger student population)
- more bilingual representation in the school (announcements, notices, posters) the program must become an integral part of the school and not simply an appendage
- creative activities outside the traditional school system to promote the use of the French language

Evaluation and Assessment

According to our survey, 60% of our respondents have not conducted a survey of their French immersion graduates or a review of the effectiveness of their immersion program, but 40% have.

The school district in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, conducted a survey in 1991 of 69 graduates from the late French immersion program at St. Stephen High School in 1989, 1990 and 1991. In the *District 23 French Second Language Study* by Diane Ganong (February 1992), the 29 students who responded indicated that :

- 80% found the immersion program a worthwhile and pleasant experience and would recommend it to others
- 97% said the French immersion program provided them with the ability to converse in French outside the classroom setting
- 55% felt their expectations from the French immersion program had not been met. Reasons given were too much English in class, lack of program support from the school board, parental pressure to join the program, and expecting to be bilingual after four years.
- 46% indicated that their knowledge of French was a definite asset in seeking and getting summer employment
- When asked for their input as to how to improve the French immersion program, the students were very candid. Most said that students should pay more attention and work harder, many advised speaking French more often and a few preferred more excursions, more French television and a good attitude.

Another study was conducted by the Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board (North Bay, Ontario) in December 1991. Its purpose was to find out whether students would repeat their immer-

sion experience and to determine their satisfaction with the program. Twenty-six of a maximum of 30 students in the two classes surveyed (one grade 11 and one OAC) answered the questionnaire. The main results are:

- Reasons for choosing French immersion: 1) to become bilingual, 2) to get a better job, 3) because of parents' wishes, 4) educational value
- 57% were satisfied with the program, 23% were very satisfied, 12% were unsatisfied and 8% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- 96% would enrol their children in the immersion program
- 96% would once again choose immersion if they were given the opportunity to start their education over.

At the Vancouver School Board, a 1987 study *Evaluation of the Secondary French Immersion Programs* was conducted by Helen Kettle. Information was collected from questionnaires from 243 students enrolled in secondary French immersion programs in two Vancouver secondary schools, their parents and immersion program staff, administrators and regular program staff. Students and parents were generally very satisfied with the program but some dissatisfaction was mentioned in the "limited choice of optional courses in French, the small number of teaching staff involved in the program which limited opportunities for students to interact with a variety of teachers, and the shortages of textbooks and resource materials." Staff and administrators also wanted a greater number of optional courses in French as well as more time available for curriculum and professional development activities.

Regina Public Schools conducted a review of how it delivered the immersion program in order to respond to the declining kindergarten enrolment and address the issues around effective and efficient program delivery. In its March 1992 *Report of the Committee for the Review of French Immersion*, the committee recommended that programs in three schools be discontinued and that any future enrolment increase be accommodated by the use of relocatable classrooms rather than designating additional schools. Furthermore it recommended that 1) strategies for managing split-grade FI classes at the primary level be examined; 2) every attempt be made to support a French-language presence in the designated schools through bilingual signs, notices and visual displays; 3) a process be developed and implemented to ensure that information describing both the FI and regular programs be made available to parents; and 4) a greater emphasis be placed on bilingualism in the selection and placement of administrative and other professional staff at the designated schools.

CERTIFICATES

A MAJORITY of the responding school divisions offer certificates or diplomas to students who complete their immersion studies at the secondary level — 58 school divisions offer certificates or diplomas of achievement. Three indicated that they do not provide a diploma, but a

mention of French immersion concentration is made on the student's transcripts. Requirements for these certificates vary widely from board to board and province to province. School boards may offer a diploma, a certificate, or both. When both are offered, a diploma usually indicates that a higher number of immersion courses have been taken while requirements for a certificate are usually lower and indicate a competence in French rather than a concentration in the language. The number of courses taken in French determines which one a student receives. The most common number of courses required to receive a diploma is 12 credits in FI subjects, but they may range from 15 to nine credits. The school board may also determine how many of these credits have to be at the grade 11 or higher level.

A certificate in extended French or a certificate of competence in French may also be offered and the requirements may range from five to nine credits at the secondary level. At the Toronto Board of Education, a Certificate of Merit (minimum eight secondary credits in French) and a Certificate of Bilingual Studies (minimum 12 secondary credits in French) are granted to successful extended and immersion students completing grade 12. At the Ottawa Board of Education, 13 credits out of the 30 credits required for the Ontario Secondary School Graduation Diploma must have been successfully completed to receive a Bilingual Education Certificate for the immersion program while seven credits are required for the extended French certificate.

In New Brunswick, all students in FSL programs are given a provincial oral interview in grade 12. Based on this test, they are rated according to an 11 level FSL proficiency rating scale and receive a Certificate of Proficiency which indicates the level attained. Students completing the secondary school immersion program in British Columbia may receive their graduation diploma (Dogwood Certificate) from the Ministry of Education in French. In line with provincial guidelines, secondary school graduates at Brandon School District No. 40 receive a diploma if they complete ten high school immersion credits, and a certificate if they complete six. The diploma in particular appears to be a genuine incentive for some students. Halifax District School Board gives a bilingual certificate at the end of grade 12 to students who have completed 50% of their high school subjects in French, including French language arts at each level. Immersion students at Burnaby School District No. 41 are presented with a special certificate from CPF for having completed the FI program. At the East York Board of Education, a *Certificat de bilinguisme* is offered when 12 credits have been obtained at the secondary level and a *Certificat de compétence* when eight credits have been completed.

PARENTS AND FRENCH IMMERSION

THE ROLE of parents in French immersion is a crucial one. Although most educational programs are teacher or administrator driven, from the start parents demanded French immersion. Even if they didn't really want to put a program in place, school boards and trustees had to respond or face

losing students to other boards who did offer it. Immersion parents, by their very nature, are committed, enthusiastic and take an active part in their child's education. They tend to be very vocal about their wishes and they are often instrumental in getting a board to introduce early immersion or back away from plans to reduce immersion. At Saanich School District No. 63 (Saanichton, B.C.), the board moved from a kindergarten entry point to a grade 1 in 1987-88. In 1990-91, the kindergarten entry point was reintroduced. "In the last few years the politics surrounding the program has abated and people involved with the program sense that there is more stability."

Parental involvement may vary and take different forms from school to school. At the school level, it may be a strong presence at the Home and School Association, school council, a parent group in the FI school, or a French immersion committee. At the district level, there may be a committee composed of parents, administrators and trustees or a Parents Advisory Committee with parent representatives from each of the immersion schools which meets to discuss issues relevant to the FI program. Most school boards mentioned the support they have received from Canadian Parents for French.

At Grande Prairie School District, parents, school administrators, teachers, co-ordinators and the deputy superintendent meet two or three times a year to give input on a range of issues. Some school boards like Surrey have a French immersion advisory committee where teacher representatives from all the schools, administrators and parent representatives exchange ideas. At Burnaby School District, the French Immersion Parent Advisory Committee is composed of the administrator and a parent representative from each FI school, a representative from the board office and is chaired by the consultant for FI. It meets three times a year to discuss issues and enjoys a close and supportive liaison with the local branch of CPF.

A bilingual School Parent Council, representing parents in French immersion programs at the Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District, meets every month to discuss issues relevant to French immersion. A board liaison is on site to address concerns and questions. The Council meets annually with the board of trustees.

IN CONCLUSION

RESULTS OF THIS STUDY show that French immersion enrolments have **levelled off** in a majority of school boards (54%). Some 38% have shown an increase of more than 1% since 1988, but only 8% have shown a decrease in enrolment of over 1%. An impressive 77% of respondents have a higher number of students in the FI programs compared to 1988 and 56% registered a higher enrolment in 1991-92 than in any previous year. This indicates that, for a great many, enrolment has not yet reached its peak.

French immersion continues to be popular and the program has expanded. The Calgary Board of Education has increased French lan-

guage time from 50% to 70% in its program and has added senior high grades 10-12. Another board has changed from a 60% FI program in kindergarten and grade 1 to 100% immersion. The popularity of French immersion in some anglophone school boards in Quebec is such that it has created an identity crisis for the boards. At the Baldwin-Cartier School Board (Pointe-Claire), the influx of French teachers and administrators and the high percentage of students in immersion has transformed the traditional English culture of the schools to French-English culture.

As programs become more established, some school boards are offering special services such as remedial and enrichment services in French and are hiring more bilingual staff. More schools have French-speaking principals or members of the administrative team as well as resource teachers and special education staff. FI resource teachers can produce significant changes through consultative help to teachers and principals, improved programming and courses of study, modified programs, and by acquiring suitable resources.

A principal reason for the continued growth of the program is the progression from grade to grade of FI classes established in the 1980s. A noticeable development is the growth of secondary school immersion programs and a greater number of course offerings at this level. Besides offering courses in French language arts, history, geography, math, and science, other subjects being offered in French by the responding school boards include physical education, health, statistics, keyboarding, drafting, computers, dramatic arts, ethics, law, world religions, sociology, nutrition, economics, typing, media, consumer education, co-operative education, visual arts, accounting, political science, Maritime studies, Christian ethics, business education, family living, communications, personal life management, and environmental science. One school board reported that before the implementation of its secondary school FI program, some immersion students chose courses designed for francophone students and many found these courses very difficult due to the vocabulary content and dropped out. At Saskatoon RCSSD No. 20, a new policy to be introduced in September 1992 requires that all high schools have a designated FI program. At the Metropolitan Separate School Board in Toronto, there has been more uniformity in curriculum at the secondary level, increased Canadian content and emphasis on cultural aspects.

In some boards the FI program has revived several schools that had declining enrolments and saved the jobs of some English teachers. Nipissing District Roman Catholic School Board has seen its program grow by about 20% per year and has increased the number of immersion schools from two to four. "The need to equip a growing program with excellent teachers and materials has been a challenge. The growth of our FI program has had some effect on our regular program schools. French immersion is sometimes perceived as a preferred area, but this view is not prevalent."

Four of the five immersion schools at Regina RCSSD have become immersion centres. However, at Metro Separate, all immersion programs are offered in double-track schools to avoid division in the community schools.

The program has also become **more accessible** to all students because of more democratic admission policies. In the early years sometimes only a select few were chosen but now any child who is interested can usually enrol. Students now in immersion are a heterogeneous group with varying abilities and levels of achievement. However, the siphoning off of many top students into the immersion program continues to remove some positive peer models from regular classes. One New Brunswick school district has been very concerned about non-immersed junior high classes as motivation and achievement are reduced because top students choose FI. "Sometimes it seems as if the regular program has been left without highly motivated students."

One reason for declining enrolments can be attributed to the wider variety of English courses and programs school boards now offer. Core French courses have also been expanded and improved and are a credible alternative for developing French competency. Although gifted services and programs are increasing, 80% of our respondents felt they had not affected FI enrolments.

Although general enrolments across the country have increased, many school districts are experiencing a **decline at the kindergarten level**. The imbalance FI creates in both immersion and non-immersion class enrolment continues to be a serious difficulty for school boards. Low enrolments in one stream create **split-classes** — the need for one teacher to supervise two grades in one classroom. Lakehead District Roman Catholic School Board says the FI program creates a drain on the English program which has resulted in a higher degree of split-grade classes. Small FI classes at the secondary level negatively affect the English track because these classes are larger. The Regional Administrative School Unit No. 1 (Elmsdale, PEI) immersion program is offered in dual-track schools at the elementary level. The schools are small and the provincial pupil-teacher ratio doesn't allow enough teachers for these schools — a few extra would be needed and it is a source of conflicts and headaches when it comes to staffing. Because of small numbers, there are a number of split-grade classes.

As well, faced with shrinking budgets, boards may feel that reducing the immersion program or cutting it altogether makes economic sense. At the Waterloo Board of Education, the cancellation of the immersion program at grade 1 in existing immersion schools has created a great deal of public reaction. A phase-out of the program will begin September 1992 at another Ontario school board with the elimination of grade 4 immersion. Every year at budget time, immersion is considered for elimination as a cost-saving measure to reduce the deficit. "This does not convey to the parents a feeling that the board is committed to such a program. Rather it accents the negative and discourages many interested parents from opting in. There is low morale among teachers, frustrated and disheartened parents, disappointed students, at times resulting in numbness and apathy."

School boards facing a decline in their enrolments have been obliged to reduce the number of schools offering immersion. A high dropout rate at the secondary level is also a concern. It is difficult in a small rural community to establish a survival level for FI; in one board the lead class is down to six students from a kindergarten group of 16. Another has

moved from two elementary dual-track schools to one dual-track school and the program's viability is tenuous with entry enrolment at just one class. A few school districts adjust to smaller numbers than anticipated by offering some courses only every second year. Larger school districts who are experiencing a decline in their total student enrolment have been operating with limited resources. In cases where immersion enrolment is increasing, growth has been accommodated because it has been controlled. However, the program may well be adversely affected should resources become further limited.

French immersion is a unique opportunity and an effective way to acquire a second language. It has widened the view of school boards about language learning in general and encouraged them to recognize the bilingual nature of the country. Over the years the program has been expanded and improved, curriculum and resource materials have been produced, and there has been an important emphasis on training and in-service of immersion teachers. Schools boards that have not felt the need to market the program in the past are now pinpointing this as an action they will be taking. The number of students in immersion may have stabilized and in some cases decreased, but there is little doubt that the demand for immersion by a significant percentage of parents will remain constant.

SCHOOL BOARDS RESPONDING TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Northwest Territories

Yellowknife Education District No. 1 and 4 of the NWT

British Columbia

Burnaby School District No. 41
Campbell River School District No. 72
Chilliwack School District No. 33
Coquitlam School District No. 43
Courtenay School District No. 71
Kelowna, Central Okanagan School District No. 23
Langley School District No. 35
Powell River School District No. 47
Prince George School District No. 57
Saanichton, Saanich School District No. 63
Squamish, Howe Sound School District No. 48
Surrey School District No. 36
Vancouver School District No. 39
West Vancouver School District No. 45

Alberta

Bonnyville, Lakeland Public School District No. 5460
Brooks, County of Newell No. 4
Calgary Board of Education
Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 1
Camrose School District No. 1315
County of Athabasca No. 12
Didsbury, County of Mountain View No. 17
Edmonton Catholic School District No. 7
Edmonton Public School Board
Edson, Yellowhead School Division No. 12
Fort McMurray Catholic Board of Education
Grande Prairie School District No. 2357
Jasper School District No. 3063
Lethbridge Catholic Separate School District No. 9
Lethbridge School District No. 51
Morinville, Sturgeon School Division No. 24
Riley, County of Beaver No. 9

Saskatchewan

Kindersley School Division No. 34
Moose Jaw School Division No. 1

Regina Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 81
Saskatoon Roman Catholic Separate School Division No. 20
Saskatoon School Division No. 13
Swift Current School Division No. 94
Warman, Saskatchewan Valley School Division No. 49

Manitoba

Brandon School Division No. 40
Dauphin, Dauphin-Ochre School Area No. 1
Portage La Prairie School Division No. 24
St. Boniface School Division No. 4
St-Pierre-Jolys, Division scolaire de la Rivière Rouge no 17
Thompson, School District of Mystery Lake No. 2355
Winkler, Garden Valley School Division No. 26
Winnipeg, Assiniboine South School Division No. 3
Winnipeg, Fort Garry School Division No. 5
Winnipeg, Norwood School Division No. 8
Winnipeg, River East School Division No. 9
Winnipeg, St. Vital School Division No. 6
Winnipeg School Division No. 1

Ontario

Belleville, Hastings-Prince Edward County Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Cornwall, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Board of Education
Etobicoke Board of Education
Hamilton Board of Education
Iroquois Falls, Cochrane-Iroquois Falls, Black River-Matheson Board of Education
Kenora District Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Kirkland Lake District Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Kitchener, Waterloo County Board of Education
London Board of Education
Mississauga, The Dufferin-Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Nepean, Carleton Roman Catholic School Board
North Bay, Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board
North York Board of Education
Ottawa Board of Education
Pembroke, Renfrew County Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Perth, Lanark County Board of Education
Richmond Hill, York Region Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Sault Ste. Marie Board of Education
Scarborough Board of Education
South River, East Parry Sound Board of Education
Thunder Bay, Lakehead Board of Education
Thunder Bay, Lakehead District Roman Catholic School Board
Toronto Board of Education
Toronto, East York Board of Education
Toronto, Metropolitan Separate School Board

Woodstock, Oxford County Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Quebec

Châteauguay, Protestant Regional School Board of Châteauguay Valley
Lachute, Laurentian School Board
Laval, Laurenlval School Board
Lennoxville, The Eastern Townships School Board
Longueuil, Commission scolaire Saint-Exupéry
Pointe Claire, La Commission scolaire Baldwin-Cartier
Saint-Lambert, South Shore Protestant Regional School Board
The Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal

New Brunswick

Bathurst, School District No. 42
Campbellton, School District No. 38
Fredericton, School Districts Nos. 26-27
Oronocto, School District No. 25
Rothesay, School District No. 19
St. John, School District No. 20
St. Stephen, School Districts Nos. 22-23
Sussex, School District No. 18

Nova Scotia

Barrington Passage, Shelburne County District School Board
Guysborough County District School Board
Halifax District School Board
Sydney, Cape Breton District School Board

Prince Edward Island

Elmsdale, Regional Administrative School Unit No. 1

Newfoundland

Gander, Nova Consolidated School District
Port aux Basques Integrated School Board
Roman Catholic School Board for St. John's
St. John's, The Avalon Consolidated School Board
Stephenville, Appalachia Roman Catholic School Board



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Mission Statement

The Canadian Education Association pursues the improvement of education and serves the education community by providing opportunities to study issues of common interest; to share ideas, experiences and information; to establish and maintain linkages with government bodies, non-government agencies and individuals; to analyze trends and directions through research; and to participate in learning activities.

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Information Notes are occasional publications of the Canadian Education Association. Suite 8-200, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V5. Telephone (416) 924-7721. Fax: (416) 924-3188

French Immersion Today est publié en français sous le titre : *L'immersion aujourd'hui*.